

## Bowdlerization and Expurgation: Academic and Folk

IN THE *Symposium on Obscenity in Folklore* conducted at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in Philadelphia, December 28, 1960, Gershon Legman, in a paper entitled "Misconceptions in Erotic Folklore," stated: "The idea that there is a special kind of folklore that is sexual, as differentiated from all other kinds, is an optical illusion caused by the operation of a purely literary censorship. No such separation exists in fact. In the field, the sexual material is offered along with all the other materials."<sup>1</sup> The implication that the folk do not exercise censorship in the presentation of folklore materials to collectors and others is all too easy to draw from this statement. Nor is this first impression cancelled when Legman immediately goes on to state that when folk censorship does occur it is due largely to the faulty attitudes and collecting techniques of the field worker. A fuller treatment of the matter, published in an expanded form of his paper in *The Horn Book*, states that "One will . . . sometimes find various levels of repertory clear in the singers' minds, of songs that can and cannot be sung, especially not in the presence of members of the opposite sex. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Again, this does little to correct the matter. Though we cannot fault Legman for the misunderstanding to which a cursory reading of his comments may lead, such an impression must be corrected so that those who have yet to harvest a crop of erotic and obscene folklore will not expect to find it immediately at the surface and will realize they must learn to dig deep.

This paper will attempt to indicate by specific examples the kinds of bowdlerization and expurgation employed by traditional singers in the performance of sexual folklore, and, further, that the kind of censorship employed by the folk closely parallel those used by academic folklorists and popularizers in presenting such materials for publication.

Before proceeding further it will be necessary to discuss the seeming redundancy of employing the terms "bowdlerization" and "expurgation" in the title and text of this paper. At present these terms are used synonymously by both scholars and the general public. In many dictionaries, either term is defined by the

other. In the course of examining examples of censorship imposed by traditional singers on their repertory, two relatively distinct ways in which such censorship is employed have been found. Because two terms—"bowdlerization" and "expurgation"—already exist, I will use these rather than create new terms, but each shall be given explicit meaning for only one kind of censorship. *Expurgation* shall refer to censorship by omission—the intentional deletion of all or part of any erotic or obscene item of folklore. *Bowdlerization* shall refer to censorship by commission—the intentional alteration or modification of any item of sexual folklore by substituting or exchanging one or more words, phrases, verses, or an entire item, for another.

### I. *Expurgation*

Expurgation—censorship by omission—is sometimes difficult to document. When something is omitted there is nothing to which to point and we must infer what has been left out. There are, however, several kinds of expurgation, and the inferences to be made will depend upon the degree of omission.

#### *Total Expurgation*

At the academic level, total expurgation of sexual materials may be inferred when, in the course of reading through a collection or anthology, one realizes that not a single obscene or erotic song appears in the pages of the work. While such songs may not exist in as great numbers as some commentators would have us believe, it is safe to say that no folk community in the world is without them. Thus, as has been pointed out by Legman<sup>3</sup> and others, when a collection of the size and scope of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*<sup>4</sup> does not report any such items we can be sure the hands of one or more censors have been at work winnowing out the erotic materials. Such censorship may have been imposed by the collectors, the keepers of the files, or the editors, but censorship has taken place.

Some collector-editors, however, will admit that censorship has been imposed by them or their publishers. The English collector Alfred Williams was honest enough to state he would not write down what he could not show others.<sup>5</sup> In the course of commenting on specific songs, other collectors refer to certain items by title or first line but indicate they are "altogether unsuitable for this work,"<sup>6</sup> or give some similar excuse for omitting the items they found offensive.

To determine the folk level of total expurgation we must apply a similar principle of knowledge by inference. When in the course of obtaining the total repertory of a singer we observe that the informant has not volunteered any bawdy or erotic materials, we can safely infer he has omitted such items by deference to our status or sex. We then must ask specifically for such materials. One can expect to be answered with remarks like: "I know one or two such pieces, but they're not fit for the ears of a gentleman like yourself" or "Ye canna sing such songs in mixed company." Gentle persistence on the part of the collector or finding the correct moment or audience will result in the informant's eventually performing such items, and frequently with great gusto.

*Partial Expurgation*

Partial omission at the academic level is not easy to document because of the tendency either to omit such songs altogether or to rewrite and substitute "clean" stanzas for the offensive ones (see *Partial Substitution* below). The most common form which partial omission takes at the academic level is the publication of only the tune and the first stanza of the song together with a comment about the omission of the remainder of the text as "words objectionable,"<sup>7</sup> or the avoidance of any excuse whatsoever on the pretense that the tune is the important thing and a full text is not needed. Certain items in which there is a loose connection between stanzas and in which some stanzas are deemed admissible while others may be objectionable are often published with only the inoffensive stanzas presented to the readers. One suspects that is frequently the case with songs like "The Derby Ram," ballads like "Our Goodman" (Child 274), or entire collections of sea shanties.

At the folk level, partial omissions can be documented from collecting experiences in which an informant sings a fragmentary text on one occasion and then admits expurgation upon later performing a fuller version of the same item. Usually the omitted stanza or stanzas are the closing ones. The ribald ballad "Our Goodman" will rarely be kept from a collector, though its concluding stanzas (the only obscene ones) may be omitted.

In the spring of 1960 I twice recorded a six stanza version of "Our Goodman" from one of my northeastern Scots informants:

## HAME DRUNK CAM' I

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| <p>1. When I cam' hame on Monday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's bed<br/>But a pair of slippers did lie.</p> <p>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"<br/>"It's a pair o' floerpots my mother sent<br/>to me."</p> <p>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thoosand miles an' more,<br/>It's a pair o' floerpots wi' soles on them<br/>I never saw before.</p> | <p>3. When I cam' hame on Wednesday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's bed<br/>But a gentleman's vest did lie.</p> <p>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"<br/>"It's a pair o' stays my mother sent to<br/>me."</p> <p>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thoosand miles an' more,<br/>It's a dooble breasted pair o' stays<br/>I never saw before.</p>             |
| <p>2. When I cam' hame on Tuesday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's bed<br/>But a gentleman's coat did lie.</p> <p>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"<br/>"It's a petticoat my mother sent to me."</p> <p>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thoosand miles an' more,<br/>It's a petticoat wi' a collar on't<br/>I never saw before.</p>                    | <p>4. When I cam' hame on Thursday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's bed<br/>But a gentleman's troosers did lie.</p> <p>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"<br/>"It's a pair o' bloomers my mother sent<br/>to me."</p> <p>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thoosand miles an' more,<br/>It's a pair o' bloomers wi' pooches in 'em<br/>I never saw before.</p> |

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| <p>5. When I cam' hame on Friday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's bed<br/>But a gentleman's hat did lie.<br/>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"<br/>"It's a chantey pot my mother sent to<br/>me."<br/><br/>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thousand miles an' more,<br/>It's a chantey wi' a ribbon roon't<br/>I never saw before.</p> | <p>6. When I cam' hame on Saturday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's bed<br/>But a gentleman's face did lie.<br/>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"<br/>"It's a new born babe my mother sent to<br/>me."<br/><br/>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thousand miles an' more,<br/>It's a new born babe wi' whiskers on't<br/>I never saw before.<sup>8</sup></p> |
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When I jokingly queried him as to what happened on "Sunday night," he answered that he had no idea. Having collected other versions of the ballad which ended on a similar note, I did not pursue the matter further. Three months later, the informant again recorded the song. When he stopped upon concluding the sixth stanza and the tape recorder was turned off, he stated that he knew another stanza but didn't wish to have it recorded. The final stanza was then taken down in long hand:

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| <p>7. When I cam' hame on Sunday nicht,<br/>Hame drunk cam' I,<br/>What did I spy in my wife's hole<br/>But a tot an' twa bollocks did lie.<br/>"Oh, what is this you've got,<br/>Pray what can it be?"</p> | <p>"It's an aipple tree my mother sent to<br/>me."<br/><br/>How many miles I've travelled,<br/>Ten thousand miles an' more,<br/>It's an aipple tree wi' hair at the roots<br/>I never saw before.<sup>9</sup></p> |
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On another occasion, my interest in songs about tinkers resulted in the collection of the following text from a female Scots informant:

#### THE JOLLY TINKER

1. There wis a jolly tinker an' he's jist noo ti the toon,  
An' he's lookin' for a job o' work an' he's searchin' up an' doon.  
*Refrain:* Wi' me lunkie tooral looral looral  
Looral looral lay.
2. "Hev ye ony pot or pans or caunelsticks to mend,  
Or hev ye got a job o' work that a tinker could attend?"
3. "I hev got some pots an' pans an' caunelsticks to mend,  
An' I hev got a job o' work that a tinker could attend."
4. She handed him a haimmer, a haimmer that he could knock,  
An' ti let the ladies know when the tinker started work.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that my informant would not permit her performance to be recorded suggested that she knew additional bawdy stanzas, but she denied knowing any. Six days later she recited the texts to more than a dozen bawdy songs, but again refused to allow her vocal renditions of them to be recorded. Finally she agreed to permit her niece to whistle the tunes to the bawdy songs so they could be recorded for later transcription. The young lady obligingly whistled the tune to "The Jolly Tinker," among others, and, when later shown the text cited above, she wrote down the following additional stanzas which she reported having learned from her aunt:

5. She gaed up the stairs to see fit she could do,  
And she jumped intil a feather bed an' the tinker jumped in too.
6. "Oh, ye've done me in the kitchen an' ye've done me in the hall."  
Up spoke the greasy cook, "Oh, could you do us all?"<sup>11</sup>

### *Dash Expurgation*

One kind of expurgation is easier to document at the academic level than at the folk level. Dash expurgation—in which obscene words are either wholly replaced by dashes or asterisks, or in which only the first and last letters of a word are printed, with the number of hyphens between intended to indicate the number of omitted letters—can be cited from several classic examples. Some of these can be found in George Milburn's *The Hobo's Hornbook* (New York, 1930), including "Down in the Lehigh Valley," pages 52–53, and "Our Lil," pages 140–141; in the latter case the editor goes so far as to print one stanza consisting entirely of asterisks!

Perhaps the most amazing examples of dash expurgation at the academic level (though not of songs) are to be found in the obscenity issue of the *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE* referred to earlier. There, in the pages of an academic journal published by a national professional society of folklorists, three articles dash-expurgate folklore texts to the hilt.<sup>12</sup> If we are asked to accept this on the grounds that the printer demanded such expurgation, then how can we explain that in the "Notes & Queries" section in the same issue there appear two texts in which the word "shit" is spelled out,<sup>13</sup> though this same word is dash-expurgated throughout the above mentioned three articles? Are we to assume the printer forbade certain four-letter words to be set in 10 point type but agreed to their appearance in 9 point type? If the printer did in fact insist upon such expurgation, then the officers of the society should have threatened to have that particular issue printed elsewhere. The printer's inconsistency in permitting obscenities in one place while expurgating them in another is an indication that he would likely have capitulated in the face of a more determined effort. The proof of the pudding can be found in the fact that wholly unexpurgated notes and articles could later be published in the *JOURNAL* (see, for example, John R. Krueger, "Turko-Mongolian Curses and Obscenities," and Ed Cray, "The Rabbi Trickster," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE* LXXVII [1964], pages 78–79 and 331–345 respectively) without so much as a demurrer from the same printer. The editor at that time refused to give special consideration to the matter, sent in the articles without mention of their contents, and they were published without comment from the printer.

Dash expurgation as such does not exist at the folk level because hyphens and asterisks are visual symbols without corresponding oral sounds. Closely related to dash expurgation, however, are those instances in oral tradition when meaningless vocables, such as humming of *fal-de-lals*, are substituted for obscene words in a text. Jacob Elder reports that when calypso singers in the West Indies perform for royalty, political figures, or other important people, rather than omit satiric and ribald songs from their repertory on such occasions, they simply replace obscene or personal references with vocables.<sup>14</sup>

An example of the use of vocables as an expurgating device may be found in a

*voyeur* song collected from Robert Beers. Mr. Beers, who learned the song in North Freedom, Wisconsin, in 1938, from his grandfather, George Sullivan, reported that when his grandfather sang the song for strangers he replaced the word "cunt" with a humming sound, though when performing before an all-male audience of his friends and neighbors he would avoid such expurgation:

#### A MAID SAT BATHING

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| 1. A maid sat bathing by a spring<br>Where fairest shades did hide her;<br>The winds blew calm, the birds did sing,<br>And the cool stream ran beside her. | 3. Each day I tiptoed to the place<br>Where lay this comely maiden,<br>But though I gazed on her face<br>She kept her [hmmmm] well hidden.                             |
| 2. My wanton thoughts enticed my eye<br>To see what was forbidden,<br>But in the time I fain did spy<br>She kept her [hmmmm] well hidden.                  | 4. Into the night, while deep in sleep,<br>Stepped forth my lovely vision,<br>But, alas, however close she creeps,<br>She keeps her [hmmmm] well hidden. <sup>15</sup> |

One must be careful not to include under the heading of dash expurgation those bawdy and obscene ballads in which the text contains vocables as an integral part of their structure. Ballads like "The Chandler's Wife,"<sup>16</sup> in which various sexual activities are described by the imitation of a knocking sound or other vocables, are not expurgated. Vocables are used as an integral part of such songs and their purpose is to heighten the inherent sexual humor by onomatopoeics which suggest the sexual activity referred to.

Nor can we include under this heading songs like "Sweet Violets,"<sup>17</sup> "Ask Me No Questions,"<sup>18</sup> and "The Clean Story,"<sup>19</sup> in which continuity is halted and silence momentarily replaces an obvious rhyme word of obscene or scatological intent, after which the momentary pause is followed by a chorus or the first word of the next line, often a homonym of the omitted word. Here, too, the omission of the obscene word is an integral part of the song and does not result from the attempt of a singer to expurgate words which might prove objectionable to any particular audience.

## II. Bowdlerization

Like expurgation, bowdlerization—censorship by commission—exists at various levels. Entire texts may be substituted, parts of texts may be rewritten, or single words may be exchanged in order to soften the obscene or erotic content of a song.

### *Total Substitution*

American ballad scholars have rarely indulged in total replacement of an erotic or obscene text by a less offensive one. Their British counterparts, however, have frequently indulged in substituting mild texts for coarse ones, even going so far as to write their own words to replace those collected with the beautiful melodies they wished to preserve and present to genteel drawing-room audiences. The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould is an excellent case in point. In his notes to the final edition of *Songs of the West*,<sup>20</sup> he indicates that he supplied new texts, mostly of his own composition, to replace the words he had collected for at least 20 per cent of the 121 songs whose melodies he enshrined in the volume. And most of these

textual exchanges were made explicitly because the original words "were very gross"<sup>21</sup> or "could not possibly be inserted here."<sup>22</sup>

Traditional singers rarely find it necessary to substitute one entire text for another since their main interest lies not in the preservation of melodies but in the words (with the melodies serving only as a vehicle for the text). When they fear the words of a song may offend a listener, they will not perform it. They may, however, know two distinct versions of the same song, one genteel and one coarse, and will perform one or the other according to the composition of their audience. In the northeast of Scotland, for example, singers who know the ribald version of "Bogie's Bonnie Bell"<sup>23</sup> also usually know the "clean" version written by the native entertainer "Geordie" Morris;<sup>24</sup> the version they will sing depends upon their audience or the number of drinks they've consumed.

For a similar example from America, we again turn to the repertory of Robert Beers. In 1943, Mr. Beers learned two distinct versifications of the same piece from his grandfather in North Freedom, Wisconsin. The following version of "The Little Ball of Yarn"<sup>25</sup> was sung by George Sullivan exclusively to all-male audiences:

#### THE LITTLE BALL OF YARN

1. It was in the month of May, when the lambs do sport and play,  
And the birds in the bushes sang a charm,  
That I met a fair young maid, and to her I did say,  
"May I wind for you your little ball of yarn?"
2. "Oh, no, kind sir," said she, "You're a stranger unto me  
And I fear that you may bring to me great harm.  
You better go for those who have money and fine clothes,  
And wind for them their little ball of yarn."
3. But I took this handsome maid and I led her to the shade  
While the birds in the bushes sang a charm,  
And the blackbird and the thrush hid their heads behind the brush  
Whilst I wound for her her little ball of yarn.<sup>26</sup>

On occasion, George Sullivan would sing the related ballad of "The Golden Skein" to mixed audiences:

#### THE GOLDEN SKEIN

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oh, it was in the month of May,<br/>When lambs and heifers sport and play,<br/>And tiny birds do sing a charm—<br/>I met a fair young man.</li> <li>2. The sun shone on his flaxen hair,<br/>His cheek was high and rosy fair,<br/>And when he spoke most courteously,<br/>Twas like the sound of Spring.</li> <li>3. "Oh, would you mind," he said to me,<br/>"If I do tag along with thee,<br/>Perchance to help thee bind thy hair<br/>Or weave the golden skein?"</li> <li>4. "Oh, no, kind sir, this cannot be,<br/>For you're a stranger unto me;<br/>My mistress bids, I will not bide<br/>Or pass the idle day.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. "'Tis best you go and seek out those<br/>With riches fine and frilly clothes,<br/>Where ladies fair do plait and bind<br/>Or weave the golden skein."</li> <li>6. But, oh, the day was sweet and warm,<br/>And there was pleasure in his form.<br/>To idle was my moment's ease,<br/>The rest, my heart's desire.</li> <li>7. So gently took he by the hand,<br/>To wander softly 'cross the land;<br/>To pluck a rose, to bind my hair,<br/>To tread the flowered stream.</li> <li>8. Then on my breast he wound a chain,<br/>Around and fro, and back again,<br/>And, in a cloak of lace entwined,<br/>He wove the golden skein.<sup>27</sup></li> </ol> |
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Beers reports his grandfather was aware that these two pieces were different versions of the same ballad tale, and that the erotic metaphors of the latter piece were likely to be missed in the course of their being sung to an exquisite Victorian melody, whereas the former item, sung to a pedestrian, hackneyed tune, had little to distract a listener from its patently bawdy text. It should be noticed in this context that though both songs contain related euphemisms for the same sexual referents, the humorous metaphor of "the little ball of yarn" was so obvious and so widely known it could not serve to conceal its bawdry from either male or female audiences. It had lost its euphemistic value and had thus become "a man's song." The "golden skein" metaphor, far more poetic and largely unfamiliar as a sexual euphemism to members of either sex, could be performed by both men and women before mixed audiences without offending anyone.

### *Partial Substitution*

Rarely are songs so completely obscene that a censor finds it necessary to indulge in total bowdlerization. Many sexual folksongs contain only a line or two or a few verses at the most which to a puritan mind appear to need softening. Cecil Sharp, for example, preferred not to substitute entire texts for those obscene items whose tunes he admired. Where a few judicious alterations would not suffice in emending an offending text, he simply would not publish a text at all. But rarely was he forced to expurgate a song totally. A large number of the texts he published suffered from his rewriting only a few lines. Of his editorial practice relative to "Gently, Johnny, My Jingalo," he writes: "The words were rather coarse, but I have, I think, managed to re-write the first and third lines of each verse without sacrificing the character of the original song."<sup>28</sup> Similarly, for "Whistle, Daughter, Whistle," he comments on his substitutions: "The words given me by the singer were a little too free and unconventional to be published without emendation, but the necessary alterations have, nevertheless, been very few and unimportant."<sup>29</sup> Similar examples could be drawn from the published collections of most English field workers at the end of the last century and during the first decades of this.

Some folk are even more judicious than their academic friends in the matter of bowdlerization, rarely changing more than a few words or a single line at the most. Two examples, among many, should make this abundantly clear. I am grateful to Henry Glassie for supplying me with the details of the first example.

In *More Traditional Ballads from Virginia*, Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr., published a version of "Little Musgrave and Lady Bernard" (Child 81) which he collected in 1932 from Miss Ruby Bowman of Laurel Fork, Virginia. The sixth stanza of that version runs:

So they went home a-laughin' and a-talkin',  
And when they fell to sleep,  
And when they awoke on the next day's morn,  
Lord Darnell stood at their feet, feet,  
Lord Darnell stood at their feet.<sup>30</sup>

In 1962, Henry Glassie and Paul Clayton located Miss Bowman, now Ruby Bowman Plemmons, working in Washington, D.C., as a government secretary. They recorded her rendition of the same ballad in May of that year, and in checking her



recording against the published text found a few minor differences. Only those in the first line of stanza six appeared worth checking. The singer had recorded:

So they went home a-huggin' and a-kissin'

When asked why this line differed from the published text, the singer stated that when Dr. Davis met her she was a student in a state normal college, and since they both were young, unmarried people she thought it advisable to change the "a-huggin' and a-kissin'" line to "a-laughin' and a-talkin'." The change may seem a minor one, but to a young unsophisticated female college student the embarrassment which could result from her verbalizing what she believed to be an erotic scene demanded that she soften the text in performing the ballad for the handsome young male collector.

For a second example of partial bowdlerization by the folk, we turn once more to northeastern Scotland. In December, 1959, the following song was collected from the same female informant who contributed "The Jolly Tinker":

#### THE HILL O' BENNACHIE

1. Oh, it's up among the heather on the hill o' Bennachie,  
It was there I sat a bonnie lassie sittin' on my knee,  
When a bumbee stung me right below the knee  
An' we baith came hame mournin' fae the hill o' Bennachie.
2. "Noo," said I tae my freends, "whaur are ye goin' tae spend the day?"  
"I'm goin' tae spend the day on the hill o' Bennachie  
Where the lads an' the lasses they a' sit so free  
Among the bloomin' heather on the hill o' Bennachie."  
Refrain: (Same as first verse)
3. Noo, as I was a-wanderin' on the hill o' Bennachie,  
I met a bonnie Lassie, she was kilted tae the knee;  
I took her an' whirled her an' aye she said tae me,  
"Oh, Jock, we'll gang a-wanderin' on the hill o' Bennachie."<sup>31</sup>

A little over a month later the same informant added the following stanza to the text she had previously recorded:

4. I say, bonnie lassie, wid ye tak' my advice  
An' never let a soldier laddie kiss ye mair than twice,  
For a' the time he's kissin' ye he's makin' up a plan  
Tae hae anither rattle at yer auld tin can.<sup>32</sup>

A few months later, two young nieces of this informant were practicing songs they were to perform during intermissions at a local country dance to which they had been invited. In the middle of rehearsing "The Hill o' Bennachie," which they learned from their aunt, one of the sisters stopped and remarked: "We daurna' sing the last verse. Fit wid the fowk think o' us?" After musing for a few moments she again started singing, and performed the final stanza as follows:

4. I say, bonnie lassie, wid ye tak' my advice,  
An' nivir let a sodger laddie kiss ye mair'n twice,  
For a' the time he's kissin' ye he's makin' up a plan  
Tae kiss anither lassie jist as fast as e'er he can.<sup>33</sup>

The bowdlerization of the last line may not seem particularly inspired, but it

served to allay the fears of these two young singers who preferred not to risk placing themselves in a bad light with their neighbors.

It seems appropriate to comment at this point that the standards of what is bawdy or obscene will not always be the same for both the collector and his informants, and the collector must be wary lest he impose his standards on his informants. I admit to being considerably disturbed by not being able to relate my standards to those of some of my northeastern Scots informants. What I considered ribald or bawdy, my informants would perform along with the rest of their repertory before any kind of audience. What I considered obscene, they considered merely bawdy ("It has a wee thread o' blue in it," they would say). Since obscene was terminal in my scale of values, I never was able to determine what they considered obscene—or if they even included anything in that category.

### *Coding*

The bowdlerization equivalent of dash expurgation consists of substituting for potentially offensive words or phrases equivalent terms from some other language or from a secret language or code specifically designed for such purposes. At the academic level this consists of using Latin when confronted by passages that might offend sensibilities. Folksong, however, with its formal restrictions of rhyme and meter, is not suitable for latinizing, and such devices are reserved for the less restrictive form of prose narrative.

At the folk level several examples can be cited in which a secret language is substituted for words and phrases which appear to call for bowdlerization. Tinkers in the northeast of Scotland sometimes substitute cant words in the course of singing bawdy or obscene songs, especially when a mixed audience consists of tinkers and country folk. Rhyming slang has been similarly employed by lower class British society for several centuries.<sup>34</sup>

Anyone who has collected in depth from children knows of the secret terminology created by them for use in obscene rhymes and songs. The following examples, collected from teenage boys in a Philadelphia suburb in 1964, may be typical:

	<i>Informant's Gloss</i>
Jack took Jill to the country for a spin, Her <i>clot</i> was small, he couldn't get in; He tried his best to <i>bibble</i> her there So he bibbled the clot without any hair. <sup>35</sup>	hole, cunt fuck, screw
Pepsi Cola hits the spot, Lots of hair around the clot, Twice as much when her <i>frib's</i> been robbed, A Pepsi bottle will do the job. <sup>36</sup>	cherry [hymen]

According to these informants, the glossed terms are part of a limited secret vocabulary known to only fourteen or fifteen young boys in the school they attend. As a means of teasing female classmates, they would occasionally employ the secret terms in grossly obscene conversations at whose meaning the girls could only guess.

Children and adults occasionally use play languages involving the transposition of phonemes and syllables in an attempt to disguise tabu words or phrases. A fine example may be heard in a recording of the blues, "I'm a Red Hot Mama," in which Victoria Spivey sings: "[I'm] Hunting for a man who had a *bunus like a peel*."<sup>37</sup> Anyone who has ever spoken pig-latin or enjoys spoonerisms should be able to translate the italicized phrase with ease.

In the course of presenting this typology of censorship in folksong, it has been shown that expurgation and bowdlerization by the folk parallel similar activities by popularizers and scholars. This must not be taken, however, as support for the false analogy which popularizers often draw from folk transmission processes. They believe that because the folk make changes in the course of transmitting folklore materials, others are entitled to do the same. They either forget or refuse to recognize that when the folk make such changes they are dealing with materials from their own group and subjecting them to the cultural imperatives of their own society. The popularizer draws on materials from a culture *other than his own* and subjects them to changes based on the standards and aesthetics shaped by *his* society. The original materials may have been folk, but once the popularizer changes them according to *his* values and concepts the published materials are no longer folklore.

The lesson is clear for those who intend to work professionally in the area of sexual folklore. When the folk bowdlerize or expurgate they do so in response to a specific social situation in which they prefer to avoid offending someone or lowering their own status in the eyes of the members of their audience. Despite these changes, the materials remain folklore. When a popularizer decides to bowdlerize or expurgate erotic materials for presentation to the general public, his motives may be identical with those of the folk, but the materials he publishes are no longer folklore. The academic folklorist cannot employ such rationalizations in handling sexual folklore since his audience is made up of other professionals who, at least as scholars, have no sensibilities to offend. From the academic folklorist anything less than totally unexpurgated and unbowlized data is unacceptable.

#### NOTES

1. Gershon Legman, "Misconceptions in Erotic Folklore," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE* LXXV (1962), 201. This paper was delivered for Legman by Jan Kindler of New York.

2. Gershon Legman, *The Horn Book: Studies in Erotic Folklore and Bibliography* (New Hyde Park, New York, 1964), 241.

3. Legman, "Misconceptions," 202, and *The Horn Book*, 252-253.

4. *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, general editor, Newman Ivey White. (7 volumes; Durham, North Carolina, 1952, 1957, 1961, 1962, 1964).

5. Alfred Williams, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames* (London, 1923), 16.

6. W. Christie, *Traditional Ballad Airs. . . . Procured in the Counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray*, II (Edinburgh, 1881), footnote on page 278.

7. *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, I, No. 5 (1904), 270. The tune and first verse only are supplied by W. Percy Merrick for the ballad "Lovely Joan."

8. Recorded on March 30 and again on April 19, 1960, in Fetterangus, Aberdeenshire, by C.T., a 49-year-old blind, former farm servant. The text cited is from his April 19 performance. Another variant from the same informant, with a different first verse, is published in *Chapbook* (Aberdeen, Scotland), II, No. 3 (1965), 5.

9. Copied from field notes made on July 25, 1960.

10. Copied from field notes made on December 18, 1959, as recited to me by L.S., a 59-year-old spinster henwife from Fetterangus, Aberdeenshire, who refused to allow me to record her performance of the song. A version sung by a traditional Irish singer, Thomas Moran, may be heard on *Songs of Seduction (The Folksongs of Britain, II)*, Caedmon Records TC 1143 (New York, 1962), Side A, Band 7.

11. Manuscript text obtained December 28, 1959, from E.S., 19-year-old niece of L.S. referred to in note 10.

12. Roger D. Abrahams, "Playing the Dozens," 209-220; Alan Dundes and Robert A. Georges, "Some Minor Genres of Obscene Folklore," 221-226; Joseph C. Hickerson and Alan Dundes, "Mother Goose Vice Verse," 249-259, in *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE LXXV* (1962).

13. *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE LXXV* (1962), 263, 264.

14. Personal conversation, September 29, 1966.

15. Manuscript text with tune, dated October 2, 1966. I know of no other report of this song from tradition.

16. See Oscar Brand, *Bawdy Songs and Backroom Ballads* (New York, 1960), 24-25. A similar piece is "Rap-A-Tap-Tap," in *Marrow Bones: English Folk Songs from The Hammond and Gardiner MSS*, edited by Frank Purslow (London, 1965), 73.

17. Brand, *Bawdy Songs*, 14-15.

18. See the unpublished master's thesis of Richard A. Reuss, "An Annotated Field Collection of Songs from the American College Student Oral Tradition" (Indiana University, Bloomington, 1965), 269-272.

19. Brand, *Bawdy Songs*, 36-37; also [Christopher Logue], *Count Palmiro Vicarion's Book of Bawdy Ballads* (Paris, 1956), No. VII.

20. S. Baring-Gould, H. Fleetwood Sheppard, and F. W. Bussell, *Songs of the West: Folk Songs of Devon & Cornwall*, 3rd edition, under the musical editorship of Cecil J. Sharp (London, 1905).

21. Baring-Gould et al., *Songs of the West*, notes to "The Mole Catcher," page 14 of "Notes on the Songs." For the unexpurgated text, see *The Everlasting Circle: English Traditional Verse. . . from the Manuscripts of S. Baring-Gould, H. E. D. Hammond, and George B. Gardiner*, edited by James Reeves (London, 1960), 191-192.

22. Baring-Gould et al., *Songs of the West*, notes to "Furze Bloom," page 17 of "Notes on the Songs." The original song, "Gospot Beach," is published in *The Everlasting Circle*, 126.

23. A ribald folk version of "Bogie's Bonnie Belle," as sung by the traditional Scots folksinger Davie Stewart, can be heard on *Songs of Courtship (The Folksongs of Britain, I)*, Caedmon Records TC 1142 (New York, 1962), Side B, Band 10; Davie Stewart's version is published in *Chapbook*, II, No. 6 (1965), 7. Another ribald version can be heard performed by Ewan MacColl on the recording *Bothy Ballads of Scotland*, Folkways Records FW 8759 (New York, 1961), Side II, Band 1.

24. See G. S. Morris, *Oddities from Old Meldrum* (Edinburgh, n.d.), 11 (text only); G. S. Morris, *Kerr's "Buchan" Bothy Ballads*, Book One (Glasgow, 1956), 16-17 (text and tune).

25. See the remarks on the ancestry of this ballad in Legman, *The Horn Book*, 225; versions appear in Brand, *Bawdy Songs*, 56-57, Stan Hugill, *Shanties from the Seven Seas* (London, 1961), 533-534, and E. R. Linton [Ed Cray], *The Dirty Song Book* (Los Angeles, 1965), 98-99. A recording by a traditional English Gypsy singer, Ben Willett, can be heard on *The Roving Journeyman*, Topic Records 12 T 84 (London, 1962), Side I, Band 3.

26. Manuscript text with tune, dated September 15, 1966.

27. Manuscript text with tune, dated September 15, 1966. I know of no other report of this ballad.

28. Cecil J. Sharp, *One Hundred English Folksongs* (Philadelphia, 1916), xxxiv. The bowdlerized version of the song was first published in *Folk-Songs from Somerset*, 4th Series (London, 1907), 29-31. The original unbowedlerized text may be found in *The Idiom of the People: English Traditional Verse. . . from the Manuscripts of Cecil Sharp*, edited by James Reeves (London, 1958), 113-114.

29. Sharp, *One Hundred English Folksongs*, xxxiv. The bowdlerized version was first published in *Folk-Songs from Somerset*, 3rd Series (London, 1906), 20-21. The original unbowedlerized text may be found in *The Idiom of the People*, 223-224.

30. Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr., *More Traditional Ballads from Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1960), 174.

31. Recorded on December 27, 1959, by L.S. of Fetterangus, Aberdeenshire. See note 10.

32. Copied from my field notes of February 8, 1960.

33. Transcribed from a recording made April 3, 1960, by J.S. and E.S., ages 18 and 19 respectively, nieces of L.S.

34. For examples of songs containing cant and rhyming slang, see John S. Farmer, *Musa Pedestris: Three Centuries of Canting Songs and Slang Rhymes [1536-1896]* (London, 1896, reprinted New York, 1964).

35. Collected from T.R., age 14, in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, March 12, 1964.

36. Collected from J.S., age 13, in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, March 12, 1964.

37. *Woman Blues! Victoria Spivey with Lonnie Johnson*, Bluesville 1054 (Bergenfield, New Jersey, 1961), Side A, Band 5; also available on *Bawdy Blues*, Bluesville 1055 (Bergenfield, New Jersey, 1962), Side A, Band 3.

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